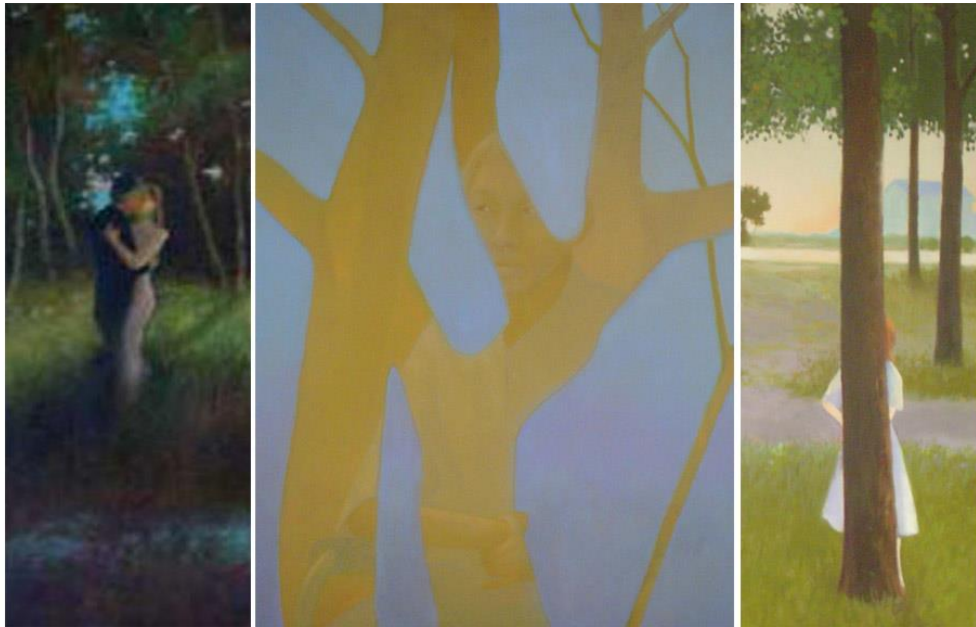


# INSCAPE



Gardner Rich

2015 – 2017

Ark Press

C'étaient des moments banals, dont la douceur me revient parfois  
dans des bouffées de mémoire. Mais tout cela est loin maintenant.

- *L'inconstance des démons* (2015, Eugène Green)

Sometime around 1980, there was a Basque shepherd living in a small wagon out in the fields north of Mary Molloy's farm abutting what was then County Road 30 but is now South Lemay. I painted his wagon-hut, with its corrugated hangar roof, wooden-spoke wheels, and cast iron skillet hanging next the hatch. I never saw the shepherd, but he was there for six months, nestled in a drainage just past the cottonwood breaks that you could see from my mother's kitchen window. Someone said he had a dog, which I also never saw. I painted the shepherd's wagon during his second sojourn north of Mary's farm. The following year, I thought to speak with him, but he did not return. Odd to think that he should be living out in the fields about the same time Bill Gates was saying publicly that 36MB (or so) of memory was all anyone would ever need. I suppose the fellow is dead by now. Surely his dog is long gone. And, for that matter, so are Mary Molloy's fields.

More than any other landscape I can name, those fields remain my mental space. I hated them, at first. During summer vacations from high school, I bucked bails for three different farmers. Bob Schneider was one. When I worked for Tom Dyekman, I stood on a wooden sled (tuning fork, actually, constructed of parallel two-by-twelves) chained behind the bailing machine pulled by his shiny John Deere tractor – otherwise, it was Sylvan Ramsey's damned old Minneapolis Moline – and I caught the bales, swung them 'round, and stacked them at the end of the fork, two bails upon two bails upon two more bails, so to make a cross-laced stack of six which I pushed off the sled with a pointed length of steel pole jammed into the hard ground for leverage, only to return the pole to its metal quiver on the side of the bailer in time to catch the next oblong block of green alfalfa that would start the next stack. Back and forth, stack after stack, all day long, for days on end, until the fields were festooned and I was as green as the Jolly Green Giant from sweat and dust. My hair, my eyes, my nose, my ears, my clothes, of course ... even my spit was green. I think the farmers liked watching their hired hand turn green like that. I had come from Redondo Beach in Southern California. The fields were in Northern Colorado, where the wind, not the surf, was up ... fifteen years before I painted *The Basque Shepherd's Residence*. Though that painting was not very good, it represented, I suppose, G.M. Hopkins's notion of "inscape".

It took time for my eyes to change, and for my distaste of alfalfa to become an appreciation of the expanse: to the West were the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, but to the North, South and East there was nothing but miles and miles stretching for miles and miles. Storm-swept. Open and free, the fields could be profoundly lonely, when the sun took its leave. The shocking blue sky and towering cumulus clouds. The genteel gulls from Salt Lake or somewhere – nothing like the beat-up birds plying the piers.

As I recall, Hopkins's phrase was "in-stress of inscape" – surely a sensibility that no longer exists. I should like to have seen the fields of his day, for it is some wonder to me that Hopkins should have coined "in-stress" in 19<sup>th</sup> century Lancashire. How could any pastoral place be the occasion of in-stress? Well, of course, in Lancashire there were fields and hills but also the mills of the Industrial Revolution. The landscape was being transformed.

The rapid transformation of the fields where I bucked bails began two or three years after the Basque shepherd was gone for good. Steel obelisks were erected seemingly overnight in the midst of Dyekman's corn rows, soon followed by the stringing of high power lines.





Titles: *Obelisk*, *Balloon Ascending*, *Storm Passing Over Mary Molloy's*, *Dead Tree* (ca. 1981)



This painting is entitled *Powerline*, and it is (was) the view looking East, across Dyekman's farm, from the north shore of Donath Reservoir (a.k.a. "Lake Donath"):



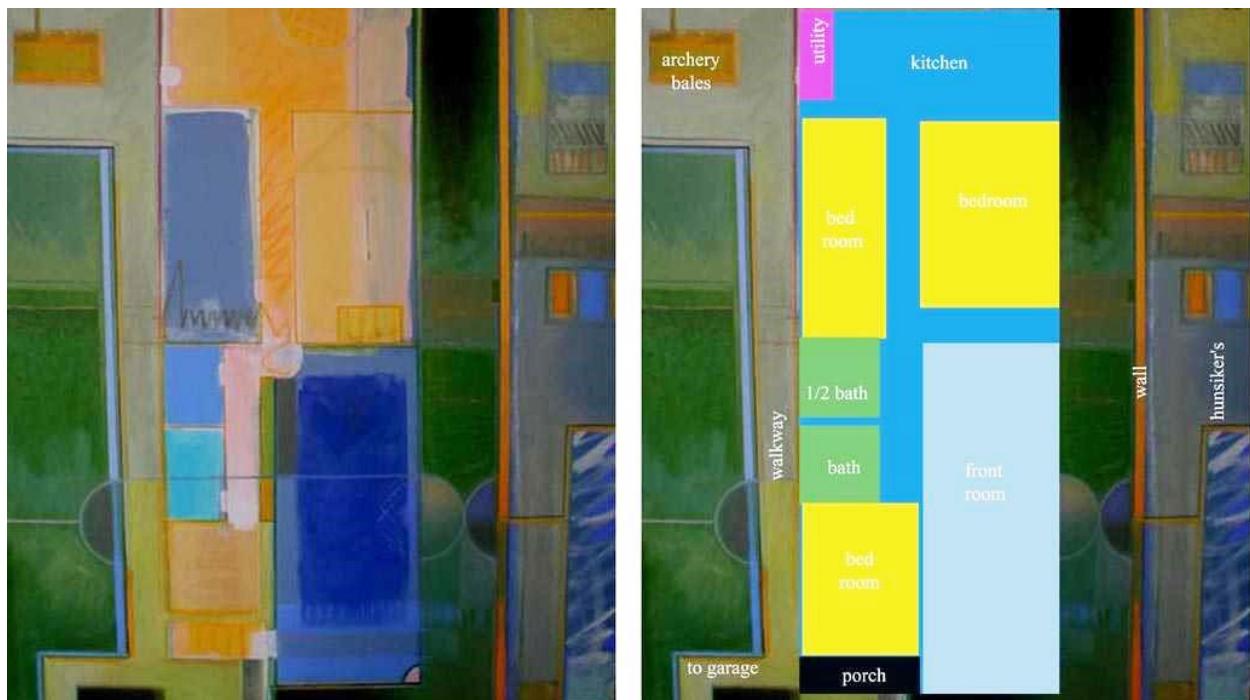
This must have been painted about 5:30 a.m. I do not recall the month, but it was after the third cutting of the alfalfa, and after the corn had been harvested, when the fields are done for the year.

Anyway, the Basque shepherd resided past the cottonwoods in *Balloon Ascending*. I do not have an image of the painting I made of his wagon-hut. I had an image, at one time, but it was a 35mm color transparency that, along with a hundred others, was destroyed when shipped by UPS from Colorado to Lampang. The transparencies were stored in metal trays, and no doubt these were x-rayed in transit. Casualties of post-9/11 security, all the slides were pitch black on arrival in Thailand. The images you see here are scans of transparencies, all done in 1999, thanks to James Disney, who took the time to do them. In showing these images, perhaps the landscape of my mind's eye becomes comprehensible. My only reservation is that none of these paintings conveys the expanse of the fields, the feeling of openness; but then, we were speaking in terms of in-stress of inscape, so perhaps *Dead Tree* and *Storm Passing* make the point best.

Yet, the point remains elusive. No one knows for certain what Hopkins meant by his phrase, so naturally there are many interpretations. Doubtless, there would still be different interpretations even had Hopkins spelled it out. I mean the place I go when my car is sitting in traffic or the

bureaucrats behind the counter are staring at the queue of applicants filed before them, and they announce: "Now serving No. 37" while I am clutching No. 98. You know what I mean.

Before the fields, when I was a boy in Redondo Beach, my mental landscape was two square miles surrounding the 2500 block of Nelson Avenue. The beaches were maybe 45 minutes on foot to the West: Redondo, Hermosa, Manhattan. From the beach, I could see the Palos Verdes peninsula, where *The Dominator* (or was it *Denominator*?) had run aground. I remember a tidal wave, tar on the feet, volleyball, and proto-bikinis. Forty years after leaving So Cal, the memory of my neighbor's yards and houses became a series of paintings called *Cognitive Maps*.



The painting *Cognitive Map 005* is on the left, and a map of the *Map* is on the right. This is the Kueneman's house, at 2513 Nelson Avenue, with a cinder block wall to its right and, on the other side, an orange rectangle that signifies the first in a row of Hunziker's cages for white rabbits. I sometimes watched Mr. Hunziker slaughter (skin and disembowel) rabbits to feed his family; and I also remember when he lost part of a finger while working with his table saw. He was a steady, quiet fellow, and his wife, Dorothy, conducted Cub Scout meetings in their garage. I am not sure how it worked out that I was in a rival den, but there it is. I went to meetings at Steve Jackson's house, three blocks away. It was Mr. Jackson who collected me one night in his station wagon, to ride with Steve to a meeting of the pack. This was during the Cuban Missile Crisis, and I asked Mr. Jackson whether we would all be killed. He stopped, thought a moment, and replied that he did not know. Then, we got into the car and went to the meeting.

Our house was at 2517 Nelson Avenue, which became *Cognitive Map 003*:



The concrete steps to the front door are right here ^ in the middle, at the bottom. (Hmm. That arrow worked out rather well, and with no planning.) The painting shows the rooms of the house and the location therein of my mother's maple furniture. Up at the top is the service porch, with a washing machine, a dryer, and an Arrowhead Spring Water dispenser. "Dispenser" does not sound right or look right, but I am disinclined to open a thesaurus. Words are like intersections crossed a thousand times on the way home. In certain lights, they do not look quite right. The loss of bearing can be disconcerting, especially when one is on the way home.

Where is home? These days, we change addresses too often and stay away too long. In the end, home must be a mental space. A picture in the mind. A locus of points that feels like the center.

Everyone knows it is possible to be in two places at once, with one location a set of triangulated coordinates. The other is the confluence of memory and imagination, an intersection where  $f(x)$  coordinates avail next to nothing. It is a different calculus, with imagination traversing tangents in light-years per second. Travers le temps, à travers l'espace à face de l'image... à la retour de mémoire...



...keeping in mind that memory, sometimes, is a double exposure:



*Best Print Possible* (ca. 1982)

An exercise in futility? Admittedly, I cannot help asking myself why anyone would bother to write anything at all – and, perhaps more to the point, why anyone would bother to read it. We are deluged, inundated, and swamped by text and texting. In this moment, the *personne* conjured in earlier journals, my old Ideal Reader, seems to be elsewhere and otherwise preoccupied. All the same, a scribbler's job is to pretend that an attentive reader is present. And that means you, so consider yourself conjured.

Allons-y.

I cannot recall when the red light first appeared on the northern horizon. I could see it through a gap in the cottonwoods, a pin point in the darkest purple-green sky, unobstructed, isolated, and unchallenged by any other light. Can you see it? The unfathomably dark night sky is moonless but splattered with stars, and there, down below and off to the north, in the ambiguous distance, is a point of red light. At that time, I often wondered about it, but never asked anyone.

One of many dateless Saturday nights, I put down the convertible top of my MGB and drove north to see whether the light was a radio tower or something else. It must have been after ten o'clock when I departed, because there was no other vehicle down any crossroad or along the way. After thirty minutes, I was northeast of Fort Collins and, to all appearances, going straight toward Wyoming. I had estimated the red light to be just outside town, but there it was, still off in the inscrutable distance.

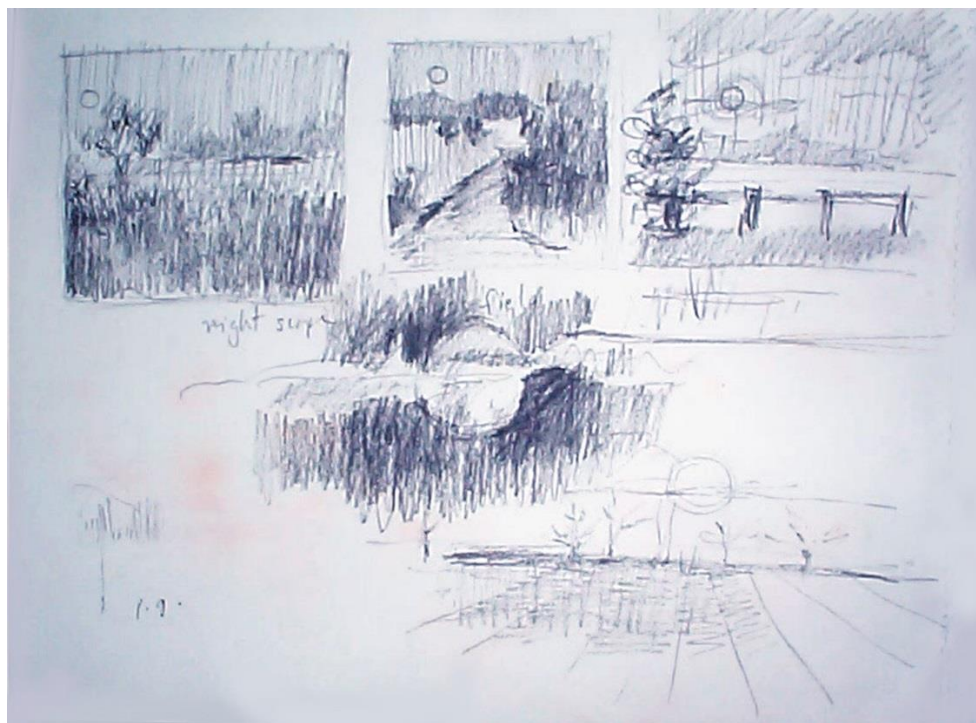
At this point, on this particular night, time became distorted. There was no clock in the car, and I have never worn a wristwatch except for a very short period in the late 80s, after my grandfather passed and my Aunt Donna sent his Swiss works to me. But, this particular night was in 1969, so I did not have a watch.

I kept on driving. There were no other lights anywhere, not even the stars that clouds obscured, just headlights and that single point of red light. It was now so dark that I could not see the fields that must have been on either side. I had not come this way before. Why, because previously there had been no reason to come this way. Usually, I turned West off County Road 30 and, a mile away, connected with US 287. From there, north to Fort Collins. But not on this night.

I kept on driving. The red light seemed to be getting a little larger while rising slightly higher above the horizon. Closer, then. But it was still off in the distance, and I kept on driving. Where was I? Did this county road go straight into Wyoming? Cheyenne is roughly sixty miles north of Fort Collins, and I had been driving for quite a while between 40 and 45 miles per hour. (One did not drive a lightweight roadster much faster than that on a dusty washboard, not unless one wanted to fly off into an irrigation ditch.)

Eventually, I came to a T-junction. All along the crossroad ran a barbed wire fence, stretching from East to West, and in either direction there was nothing but darkness. To the north, in the ambiguous distance, still relatively low on the horizon, was the mysterious red light – and I did not know anything more at the T-junction than I had known an hour or so earlier. I brought the car around and drove back to the point of departure, parked, climbed out of the car, and raised the convertible top. No, I did not lock the doors. No one did that, in 1969. Then, I looked north once again. In that ambiguous distance, the red light remained as inscrutable as ever.

One other time, on a Friday or Saturday night, I drove up from Denver (well, Littleton) after returning Lorraine Wilbur to her parents' house. I did not pass another car in either direction on Interstate 25, not for sixty miles. I know that this fact sounds astronomically improbable, if not impossible, today – but there was only the full moon and the fields, not to forget a gas pump oasis, all the way home. I have an image of thumbnail sketches done at the time:



At first, I thought to write about a recurring dream in which County Road 30 conflates with Nelson Avenue. The dream remains vivid, and so it gives me pause to realize how many years have passed since it last occurred. I could not count the years, not until I recalled *The Juggler*, which painting depicts the dream and was executed, unless I am mistaken, in 1982.

The painting (below) is quite complex, which is unsurprising considering that it was painted during a period of upheaval and uncertainty. The elements derive from various sources: the fields are in Colorado; the girl on the ground is from Lebanon (killed by the Christian militia in Beirut, she appeared earlier in a painting entitled *Peaceable Kingdom*; and she appears again in 2009, in *Les revenants du passé*); the juggler descends from jesters painted by Ray Palm onto a conga drum owned by George Kueneman, although the figure also recalls an illustration that accompanied one of Siv Cedering's poems (which reminded me of Federico Castellon's drawings in a book from my mother's small library); the white house depicted in one glass sphere is on the Nelson Avenue side of the dream-street; the landscape in the other glass sphere is on the County Road 30 side of the dream-street; and the young woman in the third sphere is Beatrice Tamara Pomasanoff, whom I knew from Redondo Beach. As to the unicycle, I had a friend who rode one for a time. So much for sources, influences, and/or references. Yet still, a question remains: Why is one landscape immediately over another? Answer: The painting remains unfinished. I never got around to painting a thin, broken line (probably orange) between the two levels.

The interpretation of the painting is left to psychodynamic and cognitive-behavioral theorists, should these specialists be driven to comment. No, it is not the dream-street, *per se*.

Alors ...





The dream-street, however vivid, and if one can recall it rightly after thirty-five years, was far more complex than this painting. The dream had no juggler, no unicycle, no Beatrice, no glass spheres, no dead girl on the ground, no landscape over another landscape, and nothing whatever that could be marked by a broken orange line. Yet the painting followed from the dream. The key is the white house in one of the glass spheres. In the dream, it was across the street on a diagonal from our front door. Its front door was open, and you could see through the cool space to the back door, which was also open. And through the back door, you could see a well-tended garden – not specifically for fruits and vegetables or for varieties of roses, although these things may have been there, somewhere, but rather more like a park without a fence. At once the street was both Nelson Avenue and County Road 30, with the one on one side, and the other on the opposite side; yet the Hearst's strawberry patch was on the side of CR 30, as was the garage at 2513 that my brother, Glen, tried to burn down. (Of course, that was not his intention, but that is how the family tell the story. From eight-year old Glen's point of view, he was experimenting with gasoline and matches. But none of that was any part of the dream.) There was no one on the street, on either side – no family, no neighbors – no one. And it was late afternoon, with the sun going down.



*Peaceable Kingdom* (1980?) – No higher resolution is possible.  
The dead girl is on the 'right foreground'. The view through an arch is also a recurring motif.





*La pensée d'avant* (2011, for my mother)

My friend Tom Katsimpalis has for decades kept a dream journal. It must run to hundreds of pages by now, but he has not shown me a single paragraph. And why should he? He claims to dream every night, just as Tim Snode said that he himself dreamed every night, but without keeping a journal. I rarely dream – or, at least, rarely recall them – but I have had recurring dreams, one of them a nightmare in which I killed an infant and buried it in a garden. When I told Janjira about this much-too-vivid dream, I could not say for a certainty whether its events had occurred in fact and that I was recalling something repressed. It bothered me for many days. I had to retrace past events, carefully, step by step, in order to sort out that it was in fact only a dream. The confusion set in because I dreamed that I was asleep, just before I awakened in fact. When I was dreaming the dream, I dreamed the infanticide. In the dream's dream, I awoke from dreaming, startled by the recollection, about the same moment that I awoke, startled in fact – like a man dreaming he is a butterfly dreaming he is a man. Only, in this instance, there was nothing Zen about it. It was terrible.



*Anastasis* (1978)

The graphic entitled "*Anastasis*" was originally an oil painting on the reverse side of a Masonite panel. Again, the sphere at lower right contains a landscape, while the topmost sphere appears to

be an interior. I cannot recall for sure, nor remember exactly whether this sort of imagery has earlier incarnations. The painting was lost when fire destroyed Dennis Goeltl's house ca. 1980. Someone from the *Reporter-Herald* later provided me with a newspaper clipping, a review of the 1978 exhibition called Anderson, Anderson & Gardner II (our first exhibition was in 1975), and the review included a benday-dot reproduction of "*Dream*", which was the original title of this particular lost painting, retrieved from the dead. Hence the new title, *Anastasis*.

Anderson and Anderson were Hugo and John, the first a painter, the second a printmaker and ceramicist. Besides being nephews of the fellow who merged the Atlantic and Richfield oil companies (ARCO) and then brought down the oil from Prudhoe Bay (the idea stemming from, perhaps, William Mulholland's aqueduct from Lake Tulare to Los Angeles), Hugo and John were part of the 'early art scene' in Northern Colorado – meaning, those individuals who arrived in the wake of James Disney. Before the 1970s drew to a close, the hamlet of Loveland was home to a number of painters, photographers, and sculptors: Disney, George Lundeen, George Walbye, and Fritz White were regionally the most visible, but there were others like myself, including Hugo Anderson, Jay Eighmy, Rand Kruback, Michael Otteman, and Ronda Stone. Forty years later, I suppose, the town is the next rung down from Santa Fe. At a minimum, there were three reasons for Loveland's growing reputation as an art center: the exhibitions and programs of the Loveland Museum under David S. Brandon, and later under Susan P. Ison, who still oversees the museum's continuing expansion; the forty-year presence of Solveig Lark's influential Gallery East, which attracted well-known artists from far-flung towns and cities; and the financial support of Douglas Erion, who is behind several committees, annual events, and projects, together with being the founder of a foundry cum complex for art classes. (Say that five times, as fast as you can.)

The first edition of *Southwest Art* appeared in the summer of 1975. Although the magazine was based in Santa Fe, New Mexico, the cover story was an interview with James Disney, a thirty-five (edited down to five) page discussion conducted by yours truly and typed by Ronda Stone. At that time, Ronda owned a secretarial service based in the architect Darrell Smith's renovated two-story-with-attic brick residence that he had converted into an office building with studio spaces. Darrell was an early environmentalist, and he was for a time on the city council along with Jack Orman, a printmaker (student of Mauricio Lasansky) and professor of art at Colorado State University in Fort Collins. When she wasn't drawing, Ronda was at her desk downstairs, while Hugo's studio was upstairs. Disney's studio was a short walk away, on Cleveland Street. The museum was five blocks to the north of Disney's, and Gallery East was five blocks north of the museum. A small world, then. Solveig Lark had decided to support the new magazine, and it was she who sponsored the interview with Disney. I have no idea why those two selected me to conduct the interview and to write it up, but that's what happened. Soon thereafter, Disney invited me to work in his studio, while the museum director, Dave Brandon, invited me to exhibit recent work (I hadn't any) at the museum (some other exhibition had been cancelled, and the museum needed to fill the gap in schedule) – so I invited Hugo Anderson to join me, and he invited John. That lessened the pressure and was fine with me, because we had approximately two weeks to put together the show. Hugo helped cover wall space by mounting his old metal kitchen sink, poly-chromed with enamel renderings of his take on Matisse. The exhibition was eclectic and different from the usual fare. Nothing sold, of course (NB. in those days, no one

asked whether a museum should be competing with galleries, probably because everyone knew everyone else and cooperated in different ways). Our second AA&G 'group' exhibition was in 1978. By 1980, we were in full flight, partly in reaction to the Western art that was becoming so regionally dominant. Much of it was plain silly – for example, Native American women painted to look like Vargas Girls. Consequently, Disney, Tom Katsimpalis, Rand Kruback, and I joined up for the farcical *Genuine Sofa-Sized Painting* – here's why: "starving artist liquidation sales" of "decorator paintings, some of them museum quality" were frequently advertised on Denver's unaffiliated television channel – which parody was oil and acrylic lathered upon the rough, old, gray divan at Disney's studio. Thanks to lots of Japan siccativ, the couch dried quickly and was mounted on the wall at the museum. (I cannot recall the rest of the exhibition.) Naturally, each cushion or section of the divan was a different painting: *Portrait of an Indian Maiden* (firmly bare-breasted, with war paint on her nipples); *Cowboy in Need of A Shave*; *An American Eagle*; *Night of the Cactus Moon* (painted upon simulated black velvet) – well, you get the idea. This was the atmosphere where we were, rather a long way from the Neo-Expressionism happening, at the time, south of Houston Street in Manhattan. Yes, we were informed in the premises; but no, we didn't chill at the Mudd Club.

Not long thereafter, Hugo opened Red House Gallery, and that was followed by Anderson & Anderson Master Prints, both 'absolute galleries' (i.e., serious venues), as Hugo had married Marianne Sollosy, a printmaker who went on to study medicine and do research at UCLA. So, Hugo married and cleaned up his act, as some used to say. Over the course of twenty years, he and Marianne moved to New York, then to Pennsylvania, then back to Colorado, and then to California, where they remain. Marianne collected old hats and sat for me in 1981, as I recall:



*Margaret's Sister*

I did my sole one-man show at Red House in 1982. When the gallery changed to Anderson & Anderson Master Prints and Drawings, Hugo and Marianne were offering work by Federico Castellon, Mauricio Lasansky, Rafael Soyer, James Whistler, and others. In the fall of 1986, after the Andersons had moved to New York, Alan Adler bought the space and opened Gallery 525. The following year, after I returned from the Sixth Judicial District, he included my work in a group show. On the night of the opening, someone trained a video camera upon the two of us. I said to Alan: "*Play It Again, Sam*. Whaddaya say?" He nodded, "Sure." Then we turned to the nearest painting and began to recite, in unison, this deadpan critique (3... 2... 1... *Action!*):

*"It re-states the negativeness of the universe; the hideous, lonely emptiness of existence; nothingness; the predicament of man, forced to live in a barren, godless eternity like a tiny flame flickering in an immense void, with nothing but waste, horror, and degradation forming a useless bleak straightjacket in a black, absurd cosmos."*

Alan's receptions had a modest reputation for being slightly off-center, but this time everyone stopped sipping their chardonnay and fell silent. Recitation done, we walked off, in different directions. As Disney used to say: "If you can't convince them, confuse them."

Besides being a painter, Disney was a serious mountaineer and rock climber. Because of him, all of us – myself, Adler, Anderson, Kruback, Stone, and many others on many occasions – got to see the lay of the land from high places. After Mary's fields, the peaks around Glacier Gorge make for my other mental landscape.

I suspect that no one knows Glacier Gorge as well as Disney. Lately, people in the media are recognizing that, very likely, no one knows Rocky Mountain National Park as well as Disney knows it. He has been hiking and climbing in the Park, and painting it, over fifty years. One could point to a spot on a topographical map and Jim would describe it accurately. He recalls landscape the way concert pianists remember concertos. It's that fine-tuned. Wherever the spot may be, named or unnamed, he's been there more than once, and he may have named a few of the deer, elk, marmots, or mountain sheep in the vicinity. He has given names to trees, boulders, and outcroppings of rock, always with a mixture of reverence and affection. I think his names are always apt – certainly better than "Mt. McKinley" (Denali, the indigenous ones call it), which is among Jim's many climbs outside RMNP. Anyway, I may have something more to say about *naming*, as we go.

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### **Digression: What's in a name?**

I read an interview with a young French writer, Edouard Louis, who described a process of maturation in which the first step was to dispense with his nickname, to reclaim his given name:

*Quand j'arrive à Amiens, je suis entouré de lycéens d'un autre milieu social que le mien, plus riches, plus décontractés. Ce sont eux qui commencent à m'appeler Edouard – pour eux, « Eddy » ne peut être qu'un diminutif. Au début je résiste. Puis je comprends que ce prénom peut réaliser l'écart que je cherche par rapport à l'enfant que j'ai été. Qu'il peut être le lieu de*



*la ré-invention. Un nom est aussi une histoire, et chaque fois que j'entendais « Eddy », j'entendais « pauvre », « pédé ». C'est comme ça que ça commence. Par le prénom.*

My case is similar. It began with the calling cards required for graduation from high school. My classmates had their full names printed in formal black upon white. Black upon white was fine with me, but my cards were emblazoned with a surname fronted by a diminutive. I disliked my given name, and I hated my middle name. Things got worse that summer, when I went to stay with my grandfather Gardner in Richmond, Virginia, and to work on a surveying crew in the woods of the North Anna. The idea was to save money for tuition at CSU. Grandfather called me by my given name and that was that. I evened the score by calling him Gramps, but the problem was he liked it. Slowly, my given name stopped grinding my ears. Of course, when I returned to Colorado to begin classes, it was back to the diminutive. It did not fit me as well as it had barely three months earlier, but the real rift was to come four years later, when Solveig Lark called me by my given name, introduced me to others under that name, and it stuck, not just with my new acquaintances, but with My Self. Leaving behind the diminutive signaled a change, the demarcation of a new beginning that called for an assessment of, even a break with, everything that had gone before. Sometime later, three years maybe, I heard the poet Robert Bly speak on public radio about the psychic power of claiming one's full name. I think he was dressing like Moon Dog at the time he insisted that disavowal of the diminutive was a rite of passage into the full flower of male adulthood. Moi, I never dressed or thought that way. I was rather more like Edouard Louis, the former *Eddy*.

For me, a diminutive has two aspects. One aspect, doubtless, is a mélange of love, friendliness, and kind regard; but the other aspect is to put one in one's place – and that place is chosen *for you*, not *by you*. More often than not, others, childhood friends and family especially, will exert pressure to keep you in that place. For them, claiming one's given name is putting on airs. Such a change confuses them. Makes them uncomfortable, apparently. I think that cannot be helped. On the other hand, the leveling effect of the diminutive may be, from time to time, beneficial, if not absolutely necessary to the maintenance of mental balance. We humans do have a tendency to be self-assuming, as though it were we, ourselves, who make ourselves breathe.

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### **To continue:**

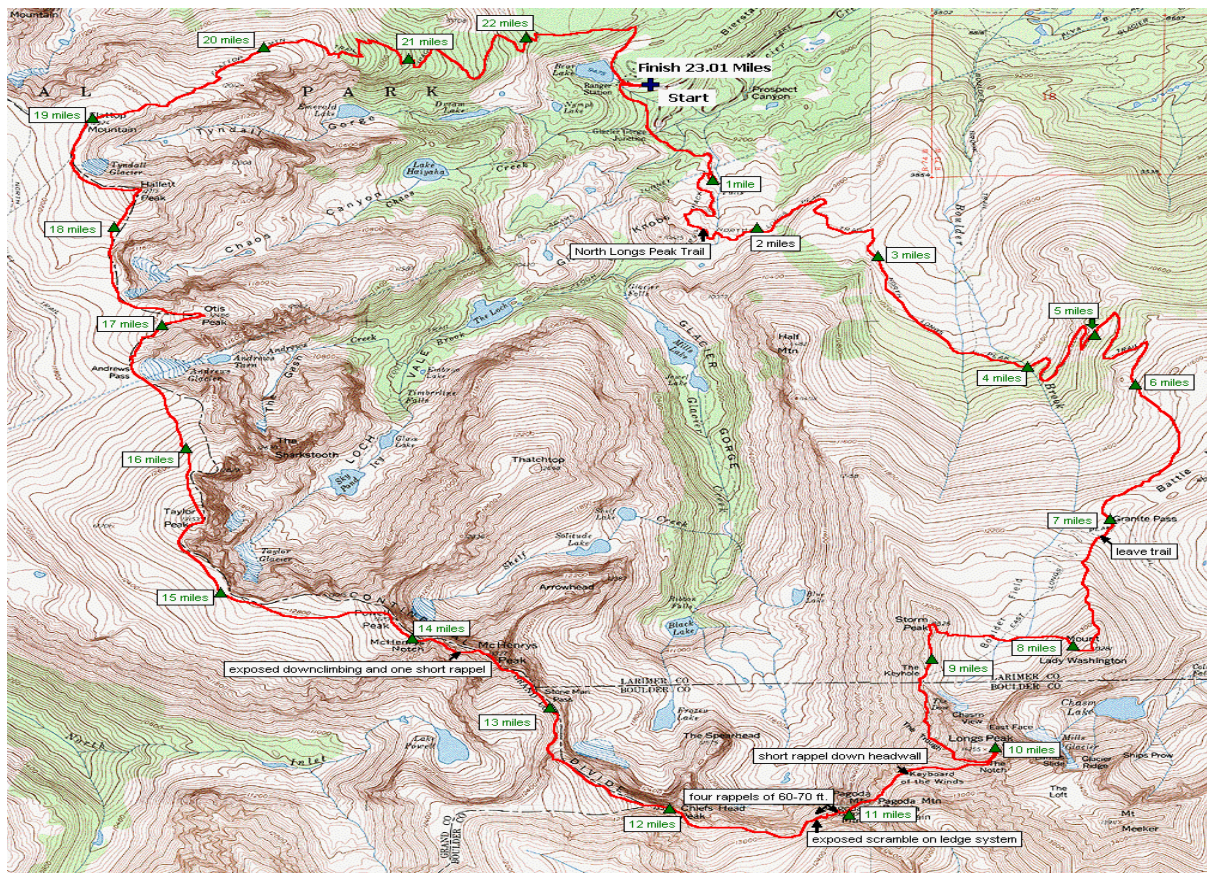
Highway 34 (West, of course) was the gateway. We practiced climbing in the narrows of the Big Thompson Canyon, and also on Twin Owls in Estes Park. Descent from the fast-eroding 'summit' of the Owls is an exercise in spelunking, and among climber-poets with an ear for richly textured language, the route itself is known as The Bowels of the Owls. As for the Ledges of the Big Thompson Canyon, these are different routes of different degrees of difficulty and different names, with the wittiest name perhaps being "US 34 Bypass". Well, anyway, I like it.

We come now to the infamous Glacier Gorge Traverse, which heroic epic will require a bit of background story that began with an entry in a ledger, became a tale told in taverns, then an *idée fixe* and a much-discussed theoretical possibility that, once given a name, became a challenge

that fired imaginations. Time after time, the Glacier Gorge Traverse ended in the frustration of aborted expeditions.

The first attempt to make The Traverse cost the life of a solo climber. And this is where the story really begins. It really begins with a fellow from the Midwestern plains who made an entry in a ledger at the Bear Lake trail head. He jotted down his time of departure at ten o'clock in the morning. He also obligingly set out his itinerary for the day and estimated that he would return around five in the afternoon. When the rangers of RMNP saw the ledger later in the day, they called in the Rocky Mountain Rescue Unit. This crew, in the early 1960s, was a volunteer group comprised of local climbers, mostly from Boulder, who had knowledge of the terrain, considerable skill, and their own equipment. Disney was an on-call member of this crew. The task facing the crew was to scour the nine peaks that encircle Glacier Gorge, looking for the plainsman who thought he could hop these summits in the space of seven hours. One of those nine is Longs Peak, *a.k.a.* The Big Dad. Most people make the round trip from trail head to summit and back within, oh, ten hours, although Disney's old friend, Chris Reveley, once ran up the hill and back in two hours. This is because most people are not animals in the sense that Reveley was an animal. The park rangers and the rescue unit proceeded on an assumption that the plainsman was more like most people than he was like Chris Reveley.

This is a map of the Glacier Gorge Traverse:



Red line and markers: James Disney



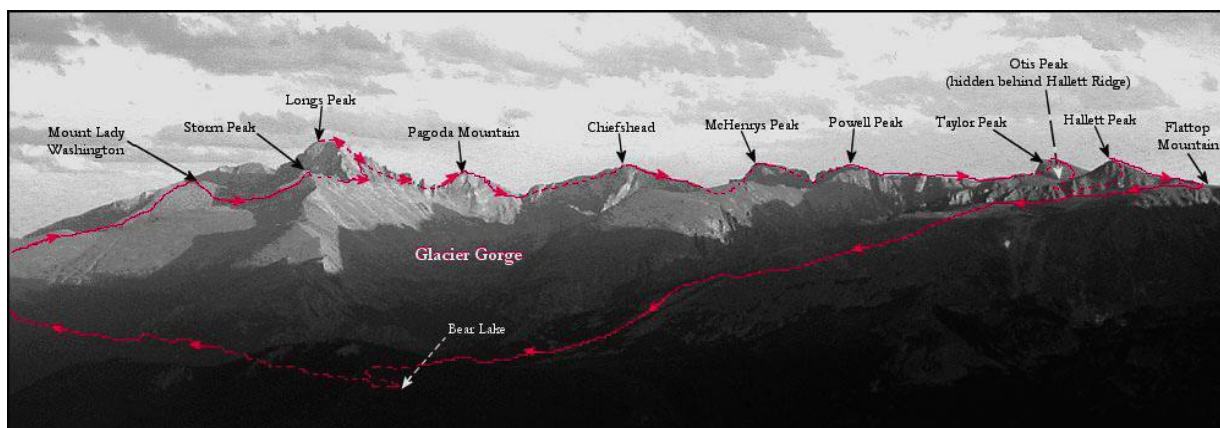


Image: James Disney

The jaunt is only 23.3 miles, not even the length of a Marathon. There are only eleven hills to ‘conquer’, and the tallest is only 14,259 feet. One easily mounts Lady Washington, drifts over to Storm Peak, scrambles up Longs, and then proceeds to Pagoda, Chiefs Head, McHenrys, Powell, Taylor, Otis, Hallet, and then runs down the ramp from Flat Top (12,324 feet). What could be simpler? Never mind the scrambles and rappels, or the airy exposure on loose footings. This is not to scoff at anyone or anything, but to scratch one’s head in wonderment at the conception of the itinerary. After all, a park ranger remarked that it would take a strong bird to summit all those peaks in one day. Even so, one does not scoff at the Midwesterner. As nameless to me as he remains, he is the stuff of legend. The rescue unit found him hanging from clothesline in Hallet Chimney. All things considered, the plainsman had come a remarkably long way.

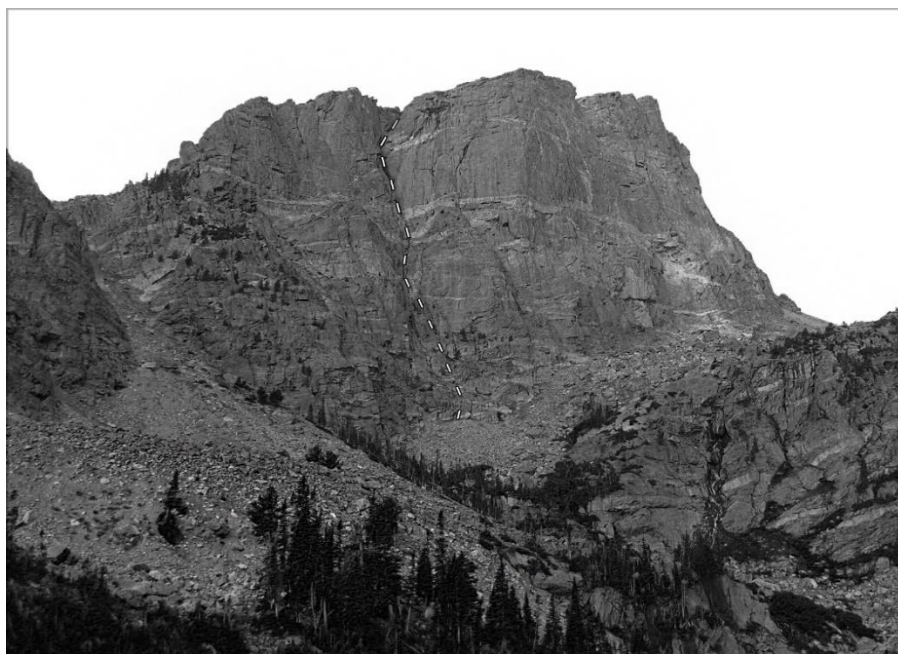


Image of Hallet Chimney: James Disney

The Traverse. In the late 1970s, I accompanied Disney in two attempts to take the trick, at a time when he had a philosophical yet clenched-teeth determination to succeed, after having made five, maybe six, previous attempts that came to nothing. Well no, not exactly nothing, because even a failure makes a good yarn, given a cold beer and buddies, and each retelling revived discussion of whether the Glacier Gorge Traverse was possible within a period of twenty-four hours.

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### **Digression: The Magic Bullet Traverse**

The seismic tumult and waves of the 1960s formed, shaped, and leveled my mental landscape. Looking back, those events seem to have affected me differently, in the long run, from their effect upon others. Especially the string of public assassinations, both white and black. These assaults left an indelible mark, placed a permanent stamp, and/or drove a 16-penny nail into my head. All these clichés fit the fact yet remain inadequate to express my feelings and confusion, which must have been shared by most Americans; all, perhaps, except those men who killed Kennedy, say. They probably felt a new lease on life.

The election of Kennedy, the court of Camelot, and the Cuban Missile Crisis are my earliest clear recollections of the larger world. True, I have some vague memory of Eisenhower's farewell address, with its opaque warning of a much too abstract 'military-industrial complex'. That vague memory has since conflated with the Kinescope someone uploaded to YouTube, so that nearly sixty years later, *I like Ike*, if only for warning us. Too bad too few of us understood the out-going president at the time. Then again, I was only eleven. At fourteen, I was force-fed (weren't we all) the report of the Warren Commission, with its post-Newtonian explanation of the Magic Bullet Traverse. Gradually, the commission's report became a kind of template, in my eyes, for the way in which the establishment (60s nomenclature, of course) constructs exercises in plausible deniability, however implausible.

Along with the disinformation (lies) that surrounded the war in Vietnam, Watergate completed my alienation from the political process, for the corridors of power were coming into sharper focus. Earlier, in 1968, I might have voted for RFK, but in that year the franchise began at age twenty-one. Of course, in the end, the voting age became moot. And, since Bobby Kennedy, I have not seen or heard a single candidate in whom I might trust.

These days, there is too much money awash, and everything looks like show business. Polished, slick, and superficial. A discourse of sound-bites and tweets. At this writing, it has been nearly three weeks since the electoral vote pushed The Donald into the US presidency. The college has decided three of the last six elections, or so I have been given to understand. No, the electors are not bound to follow the popular vote; and nor am I an apologist for Hillary Clinton, much less a fan. In fact, for different reasons, I think that both Trump and Clinton belong behind bars – and that is where they would be, were they not members of Lapham's 'equestrian class', which is an historically resonant turn of phrase more pointed than the 'one percent' one so often hears. #But, 1% makes a concise tweet.

Certainly the term ‘equestrian class’ makes reference to ancient Rome. Lapham describes this class as a small percentage of the US population, but a fairly large absolute number – that is, one percent of 350 million people. The class includes those who own the media, own the industries, and run the government, the universities, the banks and foundations and trusts, thus comprising what the French label *l’haute bourgeoisie*, scorned from Molière’s *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* down to this day. A rich tradition, then; or rather, a tradition of being rich. Motto: The one with the gold makes the rules.

I am aware of the constant comparisons between the United States and the late Roman Empire. Such comparisons are not necessarily made by those who speak of ‘late capitalism’ or who balk at the doctrine of ‘American Exceptionalism’. Certain features are indisputable: far-flung U.S. military bases not unlike Roman outposts; astronomical debt; raw materials and goods coming in from the outside; addiction to sport and spectacle; deep political division; increasing violence. Lately, with headlines such as “Five Myths About the Roman Empire”, one cannot help thinking that equestrians must be feeling a chill, even as the *réchauffement climatique* raises temperatures in the Arctic by thirty degrees or more above recorded norms.

Comparisons are also made with the so-called Dark Ages. The election of Trump and other populist candidates in the West (the implication being that the rule of reason is passing; surely the heirs of the Lumières see it that way), malfunctioning schools and rising illiteracy, the feudal propensities of corporations, the fascist tendencies of surveillance technology, the baseness of popular entertainment, and the outrageous enrichment of ruling elites are among the reasons for making the comparison. The specter of World War Three is now discussed as a contingency plan. That is to say, an option. Meanwhile, the Islamic State has retaken Palmyra, which, no doubt, they will finish destroying. Aleppo is a disaster with repercussions to follow. This morning, five weeks after The Donald lost the popular vote by 2.5 million, I am waiting to go on-line to look at American newspapers. It is still the 19<sup>th</sup> of December there, and the world’s immediate future is about to be sealed by the Electoral College. Rather, their decision is to be announced. Personally, I think it has been a done deal since before the election. Now why is that? Because Trump said that he *could have won* the popular vote *had he wanted to do that*. Ah, so he did not want to do that. All right then, why did he *not* want to do that? Because he was not concerned about it. Right. Okay, why wasn’t he concerned about it? Because it was a done deal. Q.E.D. This hypothetical syllogism makes me paranoid, does it not? Of course, this interpretation is based upon what comes out of Trump’s mouth. In my estimation, there are times when he cannot stop himself from telling the truth. Again, not that I would want a Clinton presidency, only that this is how dysfunctional the American system has become.

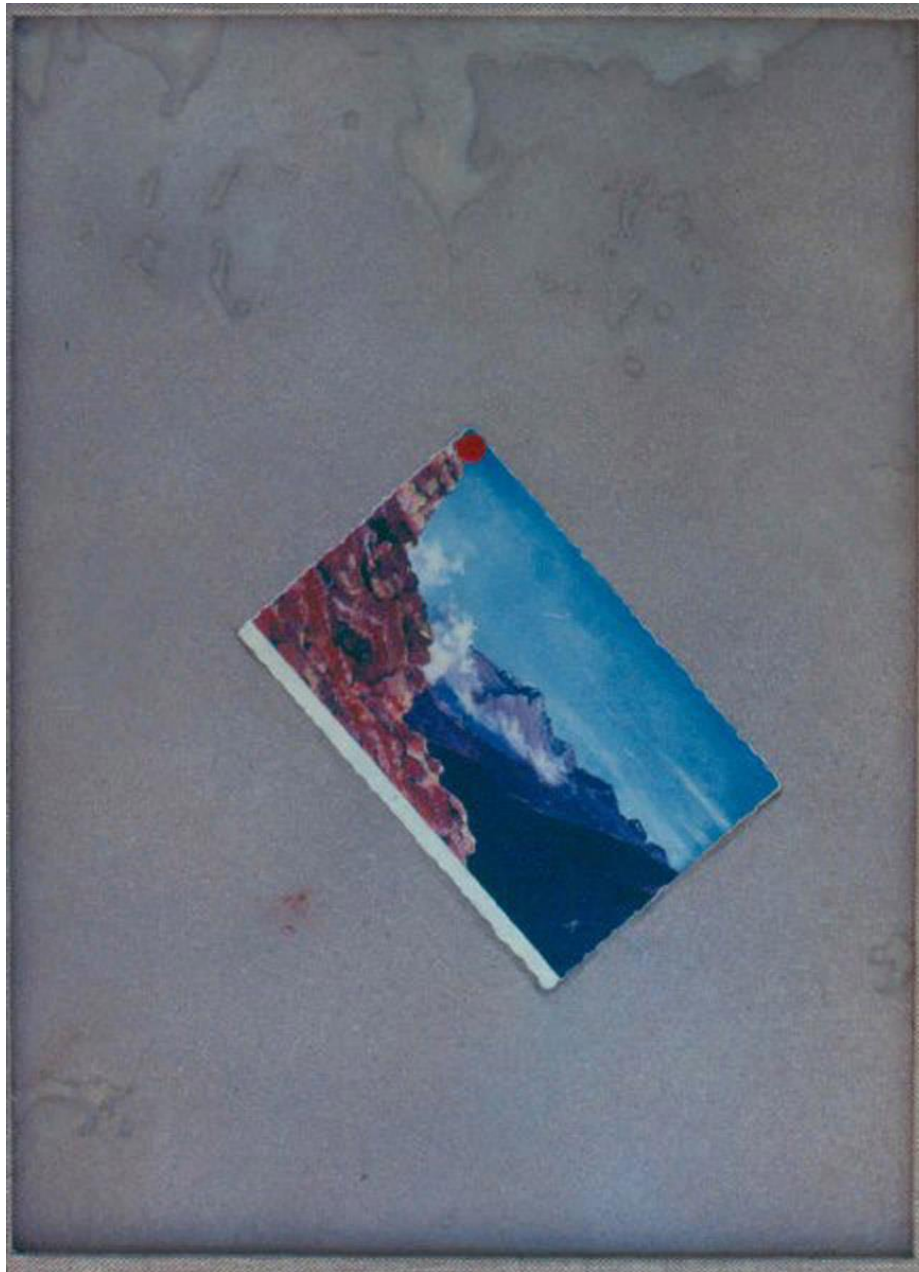
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### **To continue:**

In a solo effort, Disney completed the Glacier Gorge Traverse a couple years after he and I failed a third time. (An account of this feat may be found in Jim’s climbing journal.) This third failed attempt is the demi-traverse that still travels with me: Mt. Lady Washington, Storm, and Longs; then, my nemesis: Pagoda; and lastly, Chiefshead, where we bailed – or, rather more accurately,



descended into the Mother of All Bushwack's elder sister's garden of earthly delights. Ah, yes. What a disagreeable (read: *fucking*) tangle Glacier Gorge can be on a dark night. But, in saying this, I am getting ahead of the story.



*Postcard (Longs Peak from Trail Ridge) oil on panel, ca. 1980*

N.B. The thumbtack is real, the wall is a replication, and the postcard is a replication of a replication.

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### **Digression: Huzzah**

On 8 February, I finished writing *Pietro & Bianca*, a five-act play that took me away from this manuscript for about five weeks. And what day is today? In five more days, Mr. Trump will have been the American president for a full month. He certainly provides fodder for comment, but an effort will be made to avoid saying anything more about him, herein. I think Americans are awake, at long last, and a sufficient number of people have his number. More to the point, he's not worth the digital ink.

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### **To continue:**

Looking back nearly forty years after our third attempt at The Traverse has been instructive for me. I now take into account certain factors that went ignored at the time. One such factor is heat stroke, which had hit me the previous year and to this day makes me susceptible to the depletion of electrolytes. When I work too long outside in the sun, for increasingly shorter periods of time with advancing age, I become disoriented and begin to cramp. It is sometimes possible to wring the sweat from my clothing. More amazingly, at least to me, is that I can drink four half-liters of water, a large bottle of beer, two beer mugs of water mixed with powdered electrolytes followed by, perhaps, some cold coffee, but still not urinate for another four or five hours – and this can happen during the so-called cold season, here, in northern Thailand.

Anyway, I awoke about 6 AM on the day. I do not recall what I did that morning, except that I came to Jim's door about ten o'clock. Climbing equipment was loaded into his legendary VW van, blue and white, called The Bus. We threw in our backpacks, climbed aboard, and away we went, up the canyon to Estes Park, where Jim was renting a chalet with the intention of moving there eventually. He never did, but the reasons why not belong to another story.

We arrived around noon, as I recall. Jim's idea was to sleep until, oh, the middle of the evening, then drive up to Bear Lake in order to be at the trail head around midnight, to take advantage of the full moon. That way, we would have daylight during the technical climbing on McHenry's and Hallet Peak. Of course, between these two hills were (and still are) Powell, Taylor, and Otis. After Hallet, we would descend Flattop while blindfolded and running backwards. No, not quite, but we were nearly that cocky – and so much for logistics. Meanwhile, Jim was able to sleep on the couch, or was it the floor, downstairs. I was upstairs atop a bed, stretched out, staring at the ceiling. By the time we were at the trail head, I had already been awake for eighteen hours.

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### **Digression:**

Naturally, the world makes inroads, crowding and pressing, forcing itself upon the inscape. For a quietist, such intrusion is entirely illusory, as is the inscape itself. But for me, the transitory, impermanent material world is no illusion. It is rock-solid within its frame. For the time being, other dimensions are irrelevant, because there is no way for me to know whether they exist in

fact. True, one might place trust in the mathematical models of theoretical physics to explain the universe (whereas I remain skeptical of division by  $0^2$ ) – or, one might make a leap similar to Pascal's wager (which is how I think about reliance upon Grassmann numbers; but then, I am not a mathematician. Pascal, of course, was a mathematician, so perhaps he would understand such numbers and accept them). On the other hand (perhaps on another plane), there is a Mahayana dictum: "Emptiness is form and form is emptiness" expressed as a formula:

$$\infty = 1 = 0$$

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That should clear things up.

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### **To continue:**

At the trail head, Jim signed the register. I doubt he set out the itinerary – no need, really, where summit registers would record the saga; and no need to worry the Rangers, before their morning coffee, that we might be deranged.

Now up the trail and through the trees, the four of us making good time. Four? “Wherever I go, my shadow goes with me” (Ferran). I do not recall ever being quite so conscious of shadows, even when taking in a painting by de Chirico. Trees instead of towers; and, instead of sewers, the scent of pine.

The moonlight was preternatural in nature, meant for the balcony scene in *Cyrano de Bergerac* or to lend illumination to a title for music: *Calcium White Night*. Pale, yet bright. Synchronized breaths and footfalls, moving along in silence.

Making good time, we came through Jim's Grove and pushed toward the Boulder Field. Yet, to state things in this way is to grant that Longs Peak was, and is, a mental fixture. From the plains below, The Big Dad (as Disney calls it) is the first thing one notices when looking to the West. Then too, in conversation, the Boulder Field is understood to be the passageway to Longs. Still, a passageway has sides, so the Boulder Field is flanked by two afterthoughts: first, Mount Lady Washington, which I do not remember at all – except that, on the summit, we were looking up at Longs. From there, we burned an hour or so crossing over to Storm Peak, rugged and austere. From that summit, higher than Mount Lady Washington, we were still looking up. Perhaps this explains why the third peak on our itinerary remains a mental fixture to this day.

On Storm Peak, we did not tarry. We signed the summit register and set off. As I recall, it was mid-morning, the Bear Lake trail head was hours behind us, and maybe fourteen hours remained in which to bag the next nine summits.

No time to lose, then.

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### **Digression:**

An old friend has just arrived from UK: a second edition of *The Lady's Not For Burning* printed in 1950 by Mr. Batey at Oxford University. I had not read Christopher Fry's play for too many years. Not long ago, I downloaded Brown and Gielgud's 1950 radio performance of the play, listened to it back to back, and then ordered the well-rubbed, musty volume, with its vaguely yellow leaves and cigarette or pipe smoke-stained dust cover, through ABE. The blurb said "hardbound, condition commensurate with age". It was printed the year I was born, so I could, in good conscience, swear out an affidavit to the accuracy of that assessment. God, what a play: "Life, forbye, is the way we batten for the Michaelmas of our own particular gallows." That's from Act One. The second half of Act Two is as good as the best of Shakespeare: "You have cut yourself a shape on the air". In a handful of lines, Fry can go from the London sewers (where he spent some time during WW2) to the celestial vault without sounding a false note. It is so very unusual. His abyss is as deep as anyone else's, his absurdity as comical as the blackest, and yet he is able to soar. It's his wit that achieves lift-off (thanks to the spirit behind it), which is exactly what's missing from a Samuel Beckett play, say. (This reminds me: I also need to reread Joyce Carey's *The Horse's Mouth*: "Things are never so bad they can't be worse.")

*The heart is worthless,  
Nothing more than a pomander's perfume  
In the sewerage.*

[and this bit, from Thomas to Jennet]

*We should be like stars now that it's dark:  
Use ourselves up to the last bright dregs  
And vanish in the morning. Shall we not  
Suffer as wittily as we can? Now, come,  
Don't purse your lips like a little prude at the humour  
Of annihilation. It is somewhat broad,  
I admit, but we're not children.*

Thank you, Christopher Fry.

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### **To continue:**

We had prepared ourselves for months, mostly by running distances and bicycling and paying attention to diet. Sometime later, my son, Aaron, remarked: "You guys were animals", and perhaps we were. The certainty was that, given fair weather, we were up to the assignment. We had a clear night sky and full moon. The omens appeared favorable. Ah, yes... omens.

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**Digression:** Monday, 18 September (37 Years Later)

Went to "Escape" patisserie yesterday afternoon, to meet Scott Stewart, a fellow ex-pat. An attractive young woman came in and sat down on a divan behind him. I could not see her until Scott departed for the bathroom. Something told me to approach her, which is not my métier, at all, but impulse triumphed over reserve. I apologized for being rude and asked if we could speak together. She indicated yes, and I sat down. I told her that I was a painter in search of a model, and that I was starting again after a layoff. She said she was a student from Utharadit Province, and also that she was working (some place I did not know). I gave her a contact email address, saying that I would like to speak with her further, were she interested. I wrote down Janjira's name (because I use her account) both in Thai and English, saying "This is my wife." The young woman said that Janjira was her name, as well. When I began to write down my name in Thai, she remarked: "And that's my nickname."

I balked. She then showed me her driver's license and a message from a friend. Then her appointment came through the door and called her by my name.

I do not know what to make of cosmic jokes. I think she would make a model. But she is Thai, so I do not expect to hear from her. I said approximately that to Lorenza Macco, proprietress of the Riverside Guest House, where I sometimes play chess or quietly sit to watch the Wang River flow backwards. Lorenza observed that, with a man's name for a nickname, the young woman was likely a "tom". Of course, obviously, because my Janjira's nickname is ต้ม. Yes... Tom.

No, these omens did not appear favorable.

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**To continue:**

To use a pejorative among climbers of the eastern face's Diamond: "the tourist route" to the summit of Longs Peak passes through the Keyhole. On the right is the Keyboard of the Winds. Appropriate names, both. Airiness is palpable. The view is stunning. To the left, painted bull's eyes on rocks mark the meanders ascending to an inclined football field strewn with boulders, a.k.a. The Summit, which looks down upon a world of green and gray. In fact, one looks down upon birds soaring high over the gorge below, with everything under blue sky. West-northwest runs the Never Summer Range, and to the south-southwest one saw all the way to James Peak, perhaps no longer possible for reason of the usual depredators. And due west lay the west ridge of Pagoda.

Disney had a descent route in mind, one not previously taken, and it was during our descent that I began to tire without realizing it. By the time we were on the mountain, I had been awake over thirty hours. I do not remember the summit. The west ridge of Pagoda is another matter.

These days, I think of it as my nemesis.



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### **Digression:** the eso-exo union

Ashoka, the renowned Dharma King of India, recognized a distinction that Rudyard Kipling also understood. The distinction can be inferred from a famous inscription. In declaring the conquest of Kalinga and Ashoka's graciousness, righteousness, and many proselytizing missions to distant lands, the Thirteenth Rock Edict has little in common with Kipling's rhetorical stance except this observation: "There is no land, except that of the Greeks, where groups of Brahmans and ascetics are not found." It appears safe to venture that West was West long before Kipling.

Ashoka is of psycho-politico interest: by his own account, he massacred and/or deported 250,000 during the conquest of Kalinga. After the conquest, he felt regret. The Thirteenth Rock Edict bears witness that this emperor, the Beloved of the Gods, is grieved and wants only security and calm of mind: "The Beloved of the Gods will forgive as far as he can, and he even conciliates the forest tribes of his dominions; but he warns them that there is power even in the remorse of the Beloved of the Gods, and he tells them to reform, lest they be killed." It's Buddha or bust for creatures coming from forest tribes. Elsewhere, King Ashoka stresses the sanctity of animal life. According to his Seventh Pillar Edict, "[T]his progress of Righteousness among men has taken place in two manners: by enforcing conformity to Righteousness, and by exhortation." No doubt the second manner preceded the first.

If the preceding paragraph betrays anything to someone in search of Ashoka's righteousness, it would be that this writer is some distance from the Second Trance of Samadhi, which entails the cessation of reasoning. Instead, this writer displays "the shadowy product of the dichotomous intellect" (Manzan, *Letter to Zissan*). That's residual Greek heritage, all right.

Nevertheless, cosmogonies overlap. As in ancient Greece, so in the globalized village, where correspondences exist for backpackers everywhere. Increasingly, East is West, and West is East.

Whether we are considering Pythagorean, Platonic, Freemasonic, Satanic, Catholic, Mithric, Alchemic, Jewish, Gnostic, Islamic, Vedic, Hindu, Bon, Buddhist, Wiccan, New Age, or other quasi-religious tradition, we discover masks and public faces, circles within circles, the esoteric within the exoteric, different levels of initiation (masters, adepts, initiates, disciples, novices) and different forms of sacrifice, apocryphal literature and/or oral transmission – and, lest we forget, misleading "practitioner interviews" via YouTube videos (beware the suasion of a back beat or a tinkling piano). Voilà, la vérité : the inside skinny. Ah, secret teachings – the one-time cottage industry is now the stuff of conspiracy theory, of sense mixed with nonsense. The admixture's ratio depends upon whether one is auditing a professional investigator or a rational human being.

Various esoteric traditions and their spinoffs have common denominators, including concretized metaphors such as the sexual rituals of the Tantric and Kaballist traditions: the union of a yogin with a vajra/yogini, or of an Adam Cadmon with his Ennoia. Ritually, Ego is abandoned as the Male-Female duality becomes unified or dissolved into a manifestation or reflection of pure being, the Monism, before its differentiation into individual entities. The primordial Monism was neither male nor female; or, from another perspective, it was both simultaneously, with the

androgyny and hermaphrodite being signs of union and non-differentiation. With the Monism, not only Male-Female polarity disappears but also the Mind-Body dichotomy.<sup>1</sup>

Monism, then differentiation. As above, so below. First, the spiritual; then, the material. And now, all the *exousia* are trying to find their way back home, which is Nowhere. Nevertheless, a distinction remains: Monism is entity; Nirvana is non-entity. However, this thought is spinning wheels, right? Yet again, if anyone is spinning wheels down below, then something or someone must be spinning up above. That's the principle, so we're still workin' on it. One's relation to "It" appears to turn upon how one feels in relation to the material world. It's not merely a matter of pitting materialists against spiritualists. Recall Breton's transcendental materialism, or views equating mind with spirit. Where lies consciousness? What is it? Another plane of existence? The next phase in evolution? AI robotics, anyone? Those looking to transcend materiality may find little distinction between evolution and devolution.

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### **To continue:**

Pagoda. My recollection of the West Ridge is surely distorted. Fear of heights evaporated my adrenalin. All these years later, in my mind's eye, the ridge is a jagged blade of loose rock, with sheer drops from side to side. There was no need for an extension ladder to feel dizzy. How far was the fall? Five hundred feet, a thousand feet? To me, the distortion was nearly the effect in Hitchcock's *Vertigo* – although Jimmy Stewart's cinematic symptoms are worse than were mine. I remember being disoriented and unsure of footing, to put it mildly. I remember being *en belay*, and the drop to a narrow ridge, then the clamber over to Chiefs Head and up toward its summit. But, we did not attain the summit. We stopped about one hundred yards below it, and we began to assess our situation. Jim was tired, but I was exhausted. In order for him to continue, he would have had to carry me on his back. More, we had been too long on Pagoda, because I was crawling like a snail. We rested, looking up at the summit and knowing that this third attempt together would end right there. Well, we discussed and decided, we were clearly not thinking clearly. And so much for healthy eating. We should not have packed dried fruit, nuts, trail mix, granola bars, etc. etc. Too slow to metabolize. Chocolate bars would have been more sensible. Sugar cubes, better still.

After an hour, we began descending to the Lower Bench. I have no idea how long this took. I want to say an hour, but it was more likely two. Still ahead, the mother of all bushwhacks was waiting for us, patiently, the muck, boulders, down logs, and scrub oak going nowhere in a hurry, and it would be another ten hours or more before we trudged back to Disney's old blue and white VW bus. Unless it was a Subaru wagon. Probably it was the bus. Then the long drive home.

I cannot say whether it was day or night when my head hit the pillow, but I had been moving for more than two days. I recall calculating fifty-six hours in all, but that count was made many years ago, with me thinking all the while that, one day, I would return for another go at Pagoda.

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<sup>1</sup> "Polarity" is André Breton's term. The politically-minded Acéphale and Surrealist groups parted company in part because Breton sought to conserve poles, the root of his position face-à-face homosexuality.

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### **Digression:**

I suppose it was a stereotype that I recognized. Why, because I think in terms of stereotypes, perhaps. Voici, la mise au point: a line-up of the usual suspects. One hundred and twenty-five photographs, each one a celebrity portrait in black-and-white and identical in size, hanging at the same height in an evenly spaced queue running around the walls of Mnemonists Gallery, upstairs somewhere in Old Town, where TomKat was making ready for the opening, that night.

TomKat said to me: “In all of these portraits, only one person votes Republican. Who?”

Yeah, right, I thought. However, looking around the room, I began to entertain the notion that it might be possible to say. Gandhi was easy enough. Kennedy was a no-brainer. Nor did Albert Einstein or Leonard Bernstein present any difficulties. Nearly half were eliminated immediately, because they were writers or painters or actors or politicians known to me. That is to say, I knew he or she was a communist, or a fascist, or a monarchist, or an environmentalist, or an animal rights activist, and so on. As for those whom I recognized, but whose affiliations or persuasions were unknown to me, they tended to be eliminated by facial expression, usually an attitude of the mouth or some reflectivity of the eyes. This is where things get murky. I eliminated twenty-five or thirty of those I did not recognize. On what grounds? After fifteen minutes, the suspects had been reduced to half a dozen. Those portraits I scrutinized quite closely. Looking for what? I cannot say, yet, on some level, one by one the number of candidates came down to two. All this time, Tom has said nothing. He has not so much as blinked an eye or run a finger under his nose. He hasn't even shuffled his feet.

I interrogated the final two portraits, one of which I no longer remember. The portrait I do remember is, of course, the one that I settled upon as being the sole Republican in the line-up. “Yes, that's right,” said Tom, “it's Dennis Hopper.” You, gentle reader, may recall Hopper as an easy-riding antihero of the 1960s counter-culture. In the photograph, he looked a little too smug – that's the word – with the fetish projecting from his mouth. Granted, Doctor Freud insisted, naturally, that a cigar is sometimes just a cigar.

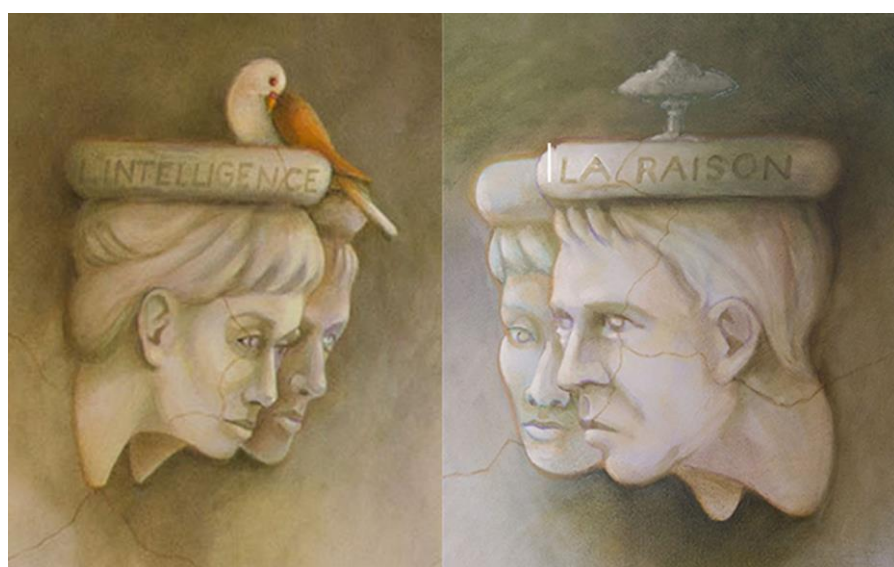
I cannot remember when this incident occurred – 1995, is my best guess – and it is odd that I am recalling it here, because I thought nothing about it at the time. Then again, though it may sound quite disjointed to say this, I have turned to a reconsideration of *l'esprit de finesse*. This follows from my having re-read, only last week, two texts which place Pascal in deep background: Eric Rohmer's moral tale, *Ma nuit chez Maud*, and also the book from which I culled this memoir's epigraph; that is, Eugène Green's *L'inconstance de démons*, wherein a rational narrator observes: « ...il est toujours inutile d'opposer l'intelligence à la Raison. »

Huh?

Yes, I know. This is not an age conducive to, nor accepting of, such thoughts.



*...et son double* (2017)



(Two details, with pigeon and plastic mushroom cloud)

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### On naming:

Does anything nameless exist? The Tao is the Tao, after all. More... Even if the Tao is all – everything – there remains, in your head, that which is not the Tao. Why, because I just put it there, in your head, by suggesting it to you. Now say, at a minimum, the Not-Tao is imaginary. But then, as a noetic entity, Not-Tao is a fact just as Nothingness is a fact. Nothingness exists only in the title of Sartre’s book – which is *something*, alas. Still, the Not-Tao may exist only in thought. Whether the Tao and the Not-Tao are each a consequence of consciousness may be the real question, while the “location” of consciousness may be merely (merely, ha!) a consequence of language. That is: consciousness may be a consequence of naming. Here, while meditating, note the unstated assumptions of materialism. C’mon, you can do it.

Every name makes a binary opposition. Names separate this from that. In a sense, metaphorical no doubt, every binary comes with GPS coordinates. And, because we are accustomed to things being either this or that (besides being either here or there), then, logically, it must be the case that consciousness – itself being a “thing” – is also either here or there. So, when you are done meditating, it’s back to the lab. You have AI simulacra waiting for you. The current conceit is that, one day, because we are set for extinction, non-carbon life forms (of our making, of course) will look back at us, the old gods, in the same way we look at fossils on the African plain. That is, unless AIs are more interested in blue-green algae, which continue to thrive. (Yeah, but do blue-green algae know they are either here or there? Monograph to follow.)

For a long time, I have been aware that a name begets classification, and that classification fixes the interpretation of our perceptions. This does not mean our perceptions are wrong. Merde. Right/Wrong. It appears that that-there binary comes with, and remains as, a consequence of a name. At a minimum, it remains as a noetic entity. Want to escape it? Stop thinking. Meditate. But then, that is a conscious decision involving volition. Enter ethics, morals, commandments, rules, norms, and postmodern theory. Of course, like Nietzsche, one may think it is possible to fly over and above these things – and it is, for a moment, if one is resting at Sils-Maria. Nothing like a good rest cure, by way of segue:

Even without having experienced symptoms as severe as those the fictional character in *Vertigo* experiences, I have little doubt that such a condition exists. At the same time, I wonder about newly named conditions, disorders, and syndromes, especially those neologisms found in the theses and dissertations of softer sciences.

We humans are so utterly suggestible that a flimflam man might say the territory is ripe for exploitation. Not only does naming *something new* provide a focus for free-form anxiety and a new topic for discussion, socio-economic factors and employment figures come into play while we are beginning to understand *whatever-it-is* with the tacit belief that sooner or later we will be in control – given enough financial support for research and development. Meanwhile, in the same moment that the *new something* becomes established, it reveals itself to be multifarious and multidimensional. Inquiry into the *new something* (a disorder, say) creates more specialized professional positions, opens clinics with trained support staff, and almost always prefigures the



manufacture and marketing of new pharmaceuticals. Not to suggest that any of this is right or wrong. Now, in brief:

A new name can change an existing paradigm. It can alter the perception of reality by calling into being something that formerly did not exist, there having been no distinction. This is one side of naming. The other side is that naming can impede perception – a paradox, given that naming informs perception. But, as with Nietzsche, it is possible momentarily to fly over all this.

Earlier, I mentioned that Diz can name all the geographical features in Rocky Mountain National Park. This has occurred from time to time when we are up high, here or there, overlooking this and that. For me, the names are always interesting, and my old friend's memory is remarkable in this respect. At the same time, I do NOT wish to hear the names. Why, because then it seems possible to see the world below as the "first explorers" saw it. Then, I become one with the place, as time loosens its hold on me. What then remains is the inscape, inside out.

Note: Today is Friday, 13 October 2017. King Bhumipol Adulyadet of Thailand died one year ago today, which is being observed as a holiday. This is also the day, in 1213, when Philippe le Bel rounded up the Templars, making Friday the Thirteenth inauspicious for several Western centuries. It's 6 AM. Coffee is made. So...

Date: 2017.10.13

White: IUSER001 [*a.k.a.* Moi, l'homme]

White ELO: 2400 [says the program; otherwise I've never been rated. Too high, for sure.]

White Type: human [thanks for the assessment]

Black: SOS 5.1 for Arena [*a.k.a.* La machine infernal]

Black Type: program

Opening: Pirc [Pirc defense, I suppose. Heard of it; never studied it.]

Variation: Austrian, 5...c5 [says the program. I remain ignorant.]

1. Nc3	Nf6	13. Ng5	Nc6
2. d4	d6	14. h4	h6
3. e4	g6	15. f5	Bd4+
4. f4	Bg7	16. Kh1	hxc5
5. Nf3	c5	17. f6	Kh7
6. d5	O-O	18. Qxc5	Rh8
7. Bd2	e6	19. Ne7	Qf8
8. Bc4	exd5	20. h5	gxc5
9. Nxd5	Nxe4	21. Qxc5+	Qh6 [unnecessary move]
10. O-O	Bxb2	22. Bd3+	Bf5
11. Rb1	Nxd2	23. Bxf5# *	
12. Qxd2	Bg7		

Except for Move 21, this may be the best game that I have ever played. A good place to stop playing against computers, don't you agree?

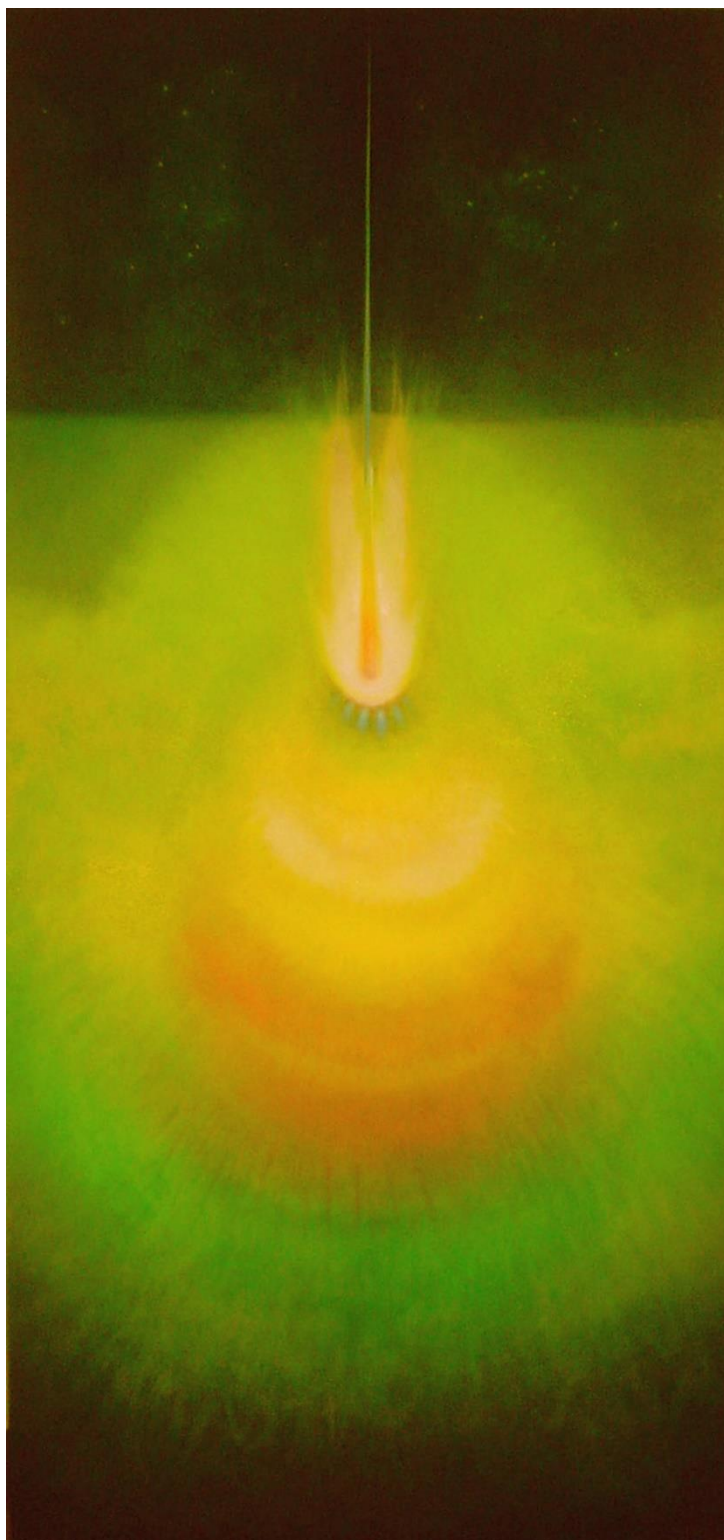
Looks like rain today.



*Janjira with Moon* (1997)



*Le son d'un main* (2012, for my father)



*Chute libre* (2012)





*Les revenants du passé* (2009)

The dimensions of *Les revenants du passé* (2009) are 8-feet by 12-feet. In the middle, toward the bottom, lies the same girl who appears in *Peaceable Kingdom* and also in *The Juggler*. Over decades, an *idée fixe*.



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**Final Digression:** from INSCAPE to *i*-NSCAPE (where mathematicians may be correct)

Obsessions and *idées fixes* of the mental inscape are like outcroppings of rock in the paintings of Yves Tanguy. Obstacles, then. Here is one of my odder formations, numerical in nature, of the kind most of us bypass by accepting a questionable demonstration without much question. We just want to get on with whatever it is without bogging down. We're practical. Any question that continues to turn in the mind has become an obsession. Why be obsessional when there are medicaments available? Nevertheless, one takes comfort in the thought that – however large the throng of those just getting on with it – one is not alone, for there are other nutters in the world. For example, I somewhere read that a mathematician at Oxbridge spent an entire career studying the properties of zero. Sound obsessed? Zero is a very strange number, indeed, and that nullity will be touched upon below. Yet zero is not the real target of the discussion to follow; rather, the bull's eye is a specific point, the questioning of which is proof positive that one is a nut case. No other implications may be derived. Nevertheless, a nutter remains undaunted. We begin, then, with a question that appears to be disjunctive, non-sequential, and certainly (by most measures) rhetorical:

How could anyone compare mathematics with theology? Mathematics is rigorous, relying upon first principles, derivations, demonstrations, extensions, and predictions rather than beginning with revelation and prophecy. Nevertheless, a comparison may be made to the extent that either pursuit is able to stretch the reaches of human thought and to explain an ultimate reality.

In this discussion, ultimate reality is (inescapably) *étant donnée*. Although we may deny that any ultimate reality exists, that condition would itself be, *ipso facto*, the ultimate reality. Granted, this assertion could be dismissed as a double-bind arising from language itself – something akin to the absolute statement that *everything is relative*. After all, the existential verb “to be” comes with metaphysical assumptions – as does jettisoning the verb; so, we end where we began, with argument as vicious circle, a situation also *étant donnée*.

This discussion ignores the vicious circle in favor of the Unit Circle. The objective is to point out an apparent anomaly that may have repercussions, a kind of butterfly effect, bearing directly upon our theoretical models and conceptions of ultimate reality.

In the background lurk two questions. One question is whether math is something that happens in the mind; another question is whether math corresponds always with  $|reality|$ .<sup>2</sup>

In Western theoretical models, at this time, there is a multi-dimensional ultimate reality. How many dimensions is a matter of numerical conjectures, but the usual number is nine dimensions (plus time). In Western Christendom, there is a three-dimensional division of ultimate reality:

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<sup>2</sup> Among others, Leonard Susskind has stated that he dislikes the word *reality* because it is misleading.

heaven, hell, and the physical universe itself, here skipping theological developments that have conjured a purgatory into existence. (Yes, one understands that non-Western and/or New Age cosmogonies may have  $n+1$  universes of  $n+1$  dimensions; but, in this discussion, such a view entails needless complication that could distract attention away from the point to be made.)

Given the rapid development of science and technology, it is understandable that we suppose mathematical models are almost necessarily correct because, demonstrably, mathematics work. Mathematics have put us on the moon, given us the Internet, and soon will guide us to colonize Mars. It is a rational faith: if mathematics can describe and do *these things*, then math must be able to describe and do *these other things* – an assumption analogous to an old alchemical aphorism: *as above, so below*. Which aphorism suggests that an underlying unity exists and, therefore, correspondences between planes (*dimensions*, s'il vous plait). Expanding its role from counting things, mathematics is now explaining things. Life, the universe, and everything.

Theoretical physicists describe quantum landscapes<sup>3</sup> with complex numbers, which numbers are a combination of real and imaginary numbers. Imaginary numbers begin with *the square root of minus-one*. In equations, the  $\sqrt{-1}$  is replaced and signified by the Greek letter iota: *i*. Although *i* is classified as *imaginary*, I tend to think of  $\sqrt{-1}$  as an ontological number. Here is why:

We call  $\sqrt{-1}$  or *i* into existence through a leap of the imagination which must be taken for it to exist as a written symbol. To call this notion-symbol an *imaginary number* is altogether modest, considering that this new entity defies logic. [The derivation of  $\sqrt{-1}$  appears in the **Endnotes** as shown in the demonstration of Jean-Robert Argand, itself followed by another explanation from the text *College Algebra*.]<sup>i</sup>

Our  $\sqrt{-1}$  or *i* resides on the former y-axis, where it gives rise to coordinates that give rise to various time-space dimensions.<sup>4</sup> With the leap made from real numbers into imaginary numbers, many new things become possible, including the current model of a holographic universe of nine dimensions plus time. These dimensions follow from inferences: the implications of equations comprised of complex numbers. In a very real sense, mathematical imagination, based upon the conjunction of real numbers and imaginary numbers, calls various landscapes into existence: in the case of a mega-verse, there exists the possibility of different universes with different

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<sup>3</sup> "Landscape" (Leonard Susskind uses this term for particular theoretical 'environments') – This term concretizes the mathematical metaphor, so that a noetic space (or mathematical space or virtual reality) becomes a landscape one can almost put a foot upon.

<sup>4</sup> For example: vector space, lattice space, Minkowski space, De Sitter space, and more. We will not make any of these theoretical spaces a subject of discussion for the simple reason that I cannot pretend to understand them fully. Nevertheless, one may say that these are dimensional spaces originating from brains within the three-dimensional space in which we find ourselves. That is, these are theoretical dimensions that arise from coordinates implied by our equations – and those equations turn upon the square-root of minus-one.

mechanical laws – one can certainly imagine such places – so that therefore different theoretical models might exist side-by-side without internecine strife among physicists.

Theoretical physicists tend to divide between advocates of String Theory and adherents of Supersymmetry. (Here, we could compare theoretical physicists with the medieval Schoolmen, who divided between Realists and Nominalists.) No one would expect a civil war to erupt between physicists – certainly nothing like the French Wars of Religion – although acceptance of Eternal Inflation (which leads to Causal Patch Environment(s) in which competing and/or contradictory models of the mega-verse might co-exist) does have something of the Edict of Nantes about it. Within such a multiverse (*i*-NSCAPE), allow every theoretical physicist a private universe with its own mechanical laws (rules for monks) and then, perhaps, they might all get along.<sup>5</sup>

Paradoxically, these dimensional landscapes, realized with the help of computerized graphics, are simultaneously a mathematical inference and a metaphysical position – why, because making the leap to accept  $\sqrt{-1}$  is similar to making an ontological argument for the existence of god. With ontology, if one can imagine something, then it must exist. One can imagine a negative number that does not follow the principle of square roots.<sup>6</sup> Hence, one may well see imaginary numbers as being ontological numbers.

Here is a rough translation of observations made by Christian G rini, a lecturer at University of Toulon, associate professor of mathematics and historian of sciences at University of Paris (the French text may be found at Endnote 2)<sup>ii</sup> :

“In the field of geometry, Argand reproduced by analogy, and always in respect of the principle of permanence recalled by Cartan, the procedure of extension that has led, in the field of algebra, to the establishment of imaginary numbers and the operations involving them. He [Argand] **displaces the problem**: there certainly is a [geometric] figure that “translates” imaginary properties, but these [properties] are never of/from “reality” in the sense that they are never in relation with a projection, however imperfect in reality, through a figure or an object however approximate [alternative translation: ‘a projection, itself imperfect in reality, through a figure or object similarly approximate’]...

“We can, for example, give the irrational number  $\sqrt{2}$  in drawing an isosceles right triangle of side 1, or of the transcendent number  $\pi$ , by approximation of the circle using regular polygons: there is therefore “in reality” something that “de”-idealizes these numbers. Nothing of the sort with the imaginary number  $i$ , despite the work of Argand: the problem remains entirely unsolved simply because, in the sense of “geometric realism” inherited from the ancients,  $\sqrt{-1}$  has no legitimacy and cannot acquire it.”

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<sup>5</sup> Proposition 1: As in Plato’s ideal republic, society has need of myths (as would a multi-cultural global village).

Proposition 2: Society is increasingly engineered and regulated by computation. Question: What cosmogony would accommodate the largest number of people in a relativistic high-tech multi-cultural global village?

<sup>6</sup> The principle of square roots: If  $x^2 = k$ , then  $x = \sqrt{k}$  or  $x = -\sqrt{k}$  (For  $\pm \sqrt{k}$ ,  $x$  will always be positive.)

Here we are, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, still confronting old conundrums. Imaginary numbers have presented a difficulty since before Descartes coined the term *quantités imaginaires* in the latter 17<sup>th</sup> century. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, mathematicians had generally come to accept imaginary numbers owing to their *efficacité* – but still, even today, reservations remain.

Nevertheless, as Gérini points out, imaginary numbers appear to work and mathematics continue to advance while they make possible our square-root of minus-one pads, our *i*-phones, and our cosmological theories. *Mais pourtant*, there remains an epistemological question whether math is something that happens in the mind; that is, whether math always corresponds with |reality|. More on this, below.

Meanwhile...

Zero (0) is a strange entity. It *represents* or stands in for “nothing” while it *corresponds* with nothing – which is to say, zero has no analog in Nature. Given that information is never lost, even with black holes, one might view zero as being merely a notion. Being and nothingness aside, it is the case in mathematics that (for any number  $n$ ):  $n^0 = 1$  although  $0^n = 0$ .

Does this look like nonsense?  $[E^0 = (mc^2)^0] = 1$  Or this?  $0^E = 0^{mc \cdot mc} = 0$

Using  $n = 3$ , this demonstration shows why  $n^0 = 1$

$$3^3 = [3^4 \div 3] = 27$$

$$3^2 = [3^3 \div 3] = 9$$

$$3^1 = [3^2 \div 3] = 3$$

$3^0 = [3^1 \div 3] = [3 \div 3] = 1$  That is,  $3^0 = 1$ . This progression (or pattern) holds true for any number, except for zero itself:  $0^0 \neq 1$ . Rather,  $0^0 = 0$ , as a matter of definition.

Here, it may be instructive to let Sal Khan (founder of the on-line Khan Academy) take on the question: *What about zero divided by zero?* According to Khan:

“There are two lines of reasoning, both equally valid.

Take numbers closer and closer to zero and divide them by themselves; for example: 0.1 divided by 0.1. This gives one (1). Meanwhile, 0.001 divided by 0.001 also equals one. Closer still: 0.000001 divided by 0.000001 also equals one. Neither does it matter whether these numbers were positive or negative. Negative brings the same result: 1. Based on this logic you might say that **zero divided by zero is equal to one**.

But what happens if we divide zero by small numbers closer and closer to zero? For example, zero divided by 0.1 – which gives zero. Zero divided by 0.001 gives zero. And zero divided by

0.000001 is also equal to zero. Nor does it matter whether we divide by a positive or negative number, the answer remains zero. Therefore this line of reasoning means it's legitimate to think that **zero divided by zero is equal to zero**.

Because **both views are equally valid**, and because neither of them is consistent with the rest of mathematics, mathematicians have left zero divided by zero as undefined.”

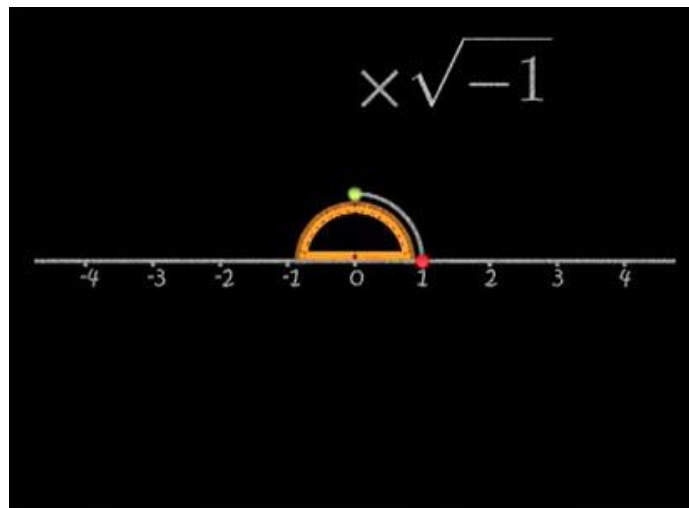
Voilà. The contradiction is compartmentalized and set aside. Yet we might ask: what does the contradiction signify? Is there something fundamentally amiss with our mathematics?

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>i</sup> Any number (positive or negative) times itself will have a positive product. This is why the square-root of minus-1 violates the principle of square roots and mathematical logic: the square of  $\sqrt{-1}$  is  $-1$  (that is, negative times negative equals negative, rather than positive).

The following images illustrate Jean-Robert Argand’s demonstration of  $\sqrt{-1}$  set forth in *Essai sur une manière de représenter les quantités imaginaires dans les constructions géométriques* (Paris, 1806). These images are screen-captures from Chapter 5 of *Dimensions: A Walk Through Mathematics* (Étienne Ghys, Jos Leys, Aurélien Alvarez; 2012):



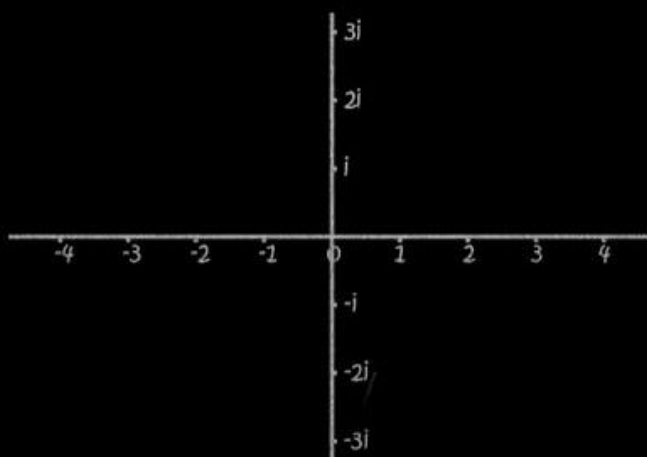


$$\times \sqrt{-1} \times \sqrt{-1}$$



$$\sqrt{-1}$$

i



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Complex numbers are the intersection of real ( $x$ -axis) and imaginary ( $y$ -axis) numbers. Notice the transposition/metamorphosis in Argand's demonstration, as algebra and geometry overlap:

$$\text{unit circle half rotation} = 180^\circ = \pi = 3.14 \dots = -1$$

More to the point, a single point on the unit circle now carries these values:

$$\text{unit circle quarter rotation} = 90^\circ = \frac{\pi}{2} = 1.57085 = \sqrt{-1} = i$$

These latter values are incommensurate, while  $\sqrt{-1} = i$  is a matter of naming.

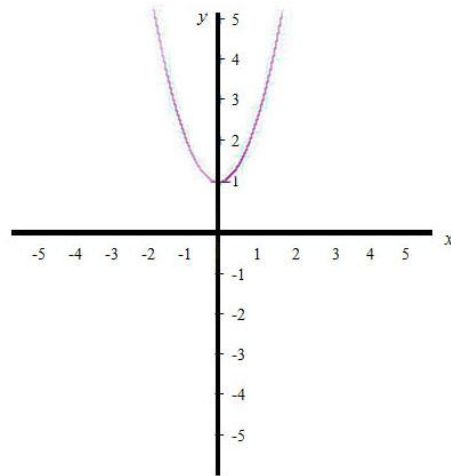
The imaginary number  $i$  comes from a quarter turn of 90-degrees to a point on the  $y$ -axis. This point is transposed to a unit of measure. At the risk of over-simplification: if we accept  $i$ , then complex numbers (combinations of real and imaginary numbers) become possible, and from there the equations of theoretical physics (highly abstract symbolic statements that we now take for descriptions of |reality|). Susskind remarks: "The mathematical statements are idealizations of, say, homogeneous space which is not entirely homogeneous in fact." An idealization is an approximation – highly accurate, perhaps – but one wonders whether small differences make all the difference, as with differences between the DNA of bonobos and human beings.

Attention Determinists and Calvinists: differences in theory imply differences of interpretation. Interpretation implies volition which does not exist in an utterly deterministic landscape; but, never mind the cognitive noise.

When we multiply a negative by a negative, the product is positive:  $-1 \times -1 = 1$ . Such is not the case with imaginary numbers. Consider: if we see the square of  $\sqrt{-1}$  -- that is,  $(\sqrt{-1})^2$  -- as being, say, similar to *the square-root of two squared*, then the two operations cancel out, and we are back with *two*, where we started. However,  $\sqrt{2}$  is positive, not negative; so, with  $\sqrt{-1}$  the question of the principle of square roots remains. Thus, how to regard *the square-root of minus-one* seems a matter of interpretation; and, at this moment in history, a particular interpretation prevails.

Once we agree to jump north from the plane of real numbers, we can imagine *the square-root of minus-one* – and then infer other imaginary numbers. Again, to make this leap, we must accept that a negative times a negative results in a negative.

According to Beecher, Penna, & Bittinger in *College Algebra* (Boston: Addison Wesley, 2002) p. 147: "We know that the square root of a negative number is not a real number. For example,  $\sqrt{-1}$  is not a real number because there is no real number  $x$  such that  $x^2 = -1$ . This means that certain equations, like  $x^2 = -1$ , or  $x^2 + 1 = 0$ , do not have real-number solutions and certain functions, like  $f(x) = x^2 + 1$ , do not have real number zeros. Consider the graph of  $f(x) = x^2 + 1$ .



“We see that the graph does not cross the x-axis and thus has no x-intercepts. This illustrates that the function  $f(x) = x^2 + 1$  has no real-number zeros. Thus there are no real-number solutions of the corresponding equation  $x^2 + 1 = 0$ .

“We can define a number that is a solution of the equation  $x^2 + 1 = 0$ . The number  $i$  is defined such that  $i = \sqrt{-1}$  and  $i^2 = -1$ .”

Voilà. Any question pertaining to the principle of square-roots has been displaced (*i.e.*, dodged); and, along the way, we have conjured zeros that are not real numbers.

Necessity is the mother of invention. By definition, imaginary numbers are necessary to the existence of complex numbers; while complex numbers are the necessary descriptors of the landscapes of quantum mechanics. For me, pictures of those environments become exceedingly strange: Looking at the  $x$ -axis, we might take  $-1$  for the mirror image of  $+1$ ; in which case, looking at the  $y$ -axis, we might take  $i = \sqrt{-1}$  for the mirror image of  $-i = -\sqrt{-1}$ . So far, so good. However, if we consider that these two points on the  $y$ -axis have other values, then what? The point  $i$  then equals  $\frac{\pi}{2}$  while this point's mirror image equals  $\frac{3\pi}{2}$  which is the point  $-i$ . Doing the division suggested by these symbols, we have  $1.57$  as the mirror image of  $4.71$  and we are no longer in Kansas but rather a different landscape with different givens. Perhaps we are looking at a mirror-image or reciprocal of our universe in which inversions of our mathematical laws prevail. In such an environment, perhaps a negative results from multiplying two negatives, while division by zero is defined. Why not? We can imagine that. Consider division of a wave length by  $0^2$  in theoretical physics:

$$\frac{\lambda}{0^2} \text{ usually written as } \frac{\lambda}{\delta^2}$$

$\Delta > \delta$  (asymptotic behavior, ou quelque chose comme ça).

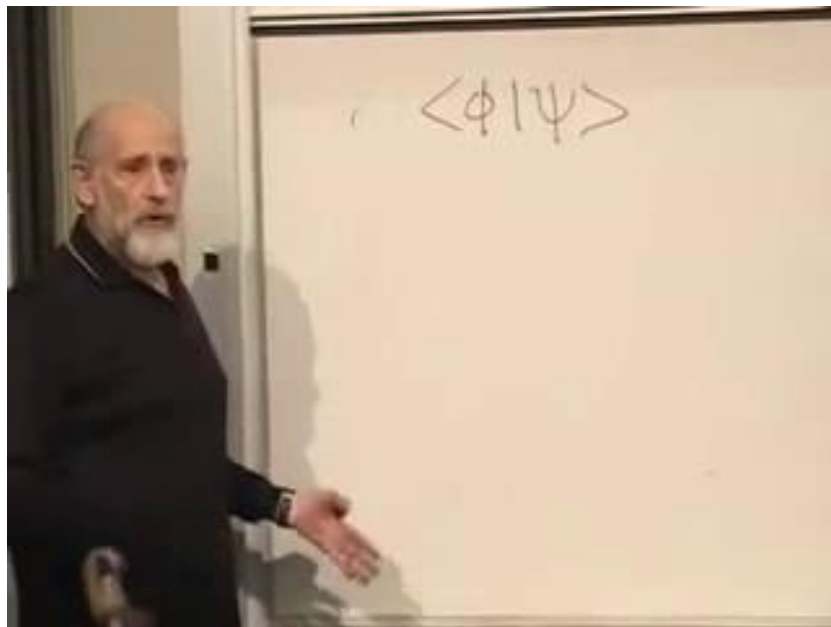
Have we not defined a Grassmann number as a non-zero square-root of zero? Grassmann numbers are the stuff of logical extension. That said, is mathematical reality a metaphysical reality? Alternatively, what's happening? Consider these two observations:

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“Black holes are where our current understanding of physics seems to break down and dividing by zero, as simple an idea as that seems to be, is where our mathematics also break down.” – Sal Khan

“At the subatomic level, there is a sense in which calculus breaks down.” – Leonard Susskind

Then again, what other tools do we possess? Likely our mathematics will continue to change, and probably our current system of numbers will go the way of the Babylonian, Greek, and Mayan systems. Here, I will impart a remark from the audience at one of Leonard Susskind’s lectures: “Do you mean to say that  $\langle \Psi | \Phi \rangle$  is just a lot of Sci-Fi?” Smiling, Susskind replied: “Write that down!”



ii Source : Christian Gérini, *La représentation géométrique des nombres imaginaires par Argand* (in PDF at [www.researchgate.net/publication/49544742](http://www.researchgate.net/publication/49544742))

[Christian Gérini, Maître de conférences à l’Université de Toulon (laboratoire I3M), Agrégé de mathématiques, Historien des sciences à l’Université Paris 11 – Orsay (laboratoire GHDSO)]

« Argand reproduit par analogie, dans le champ géométrique, et toujours dans le respect du principe de permanence rappelé par Cartan, le procédé d’extension qui avait présidé à la mise en place, dans le champ algébrique, des imaginaires et des opérations les concernant. Il déplace le problème : il y a certes une figure qui « traduit » les propriétés des imaginaires, mais ceux-ci n’ont toujours pas de « réalité », en ce sens qu’ils ne sont toujours pas en relation avec une projection même imparfaite dans le réel via une figure ou un objet même approximatifs... »

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« On peut par exemple donner du nombre irrationnel  $\sqrt{2}$  en dessinant un triangle rectangle isocèle de cote 1, ou du nombre transcendant  $\pi$  par approximation du cercle par polygones réguliers : il y a donc dans la « réalité » quelque chose qui « désidéalise » ces nombres. Rien de tel avec le nombre imaginaire  $i$ , malgré le travail d'Argand : le problème reste entier tout simplement parce que, au sens du « réalisme géométrique » hérité des Anciens,  $\sqrt{-1}$  n'a pas de légitimité et ne peut en acquérir. »



*Photo: François Le Poutré*

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